

## respect is a seven letter word by orphan\_account

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Abusive Parents, Billy Hargrove Being an Asshole, Character Study, Internalized Homophobia, M/M, Neil Hargrove Being an Asshole, Period-Typical Homophobia, billy destroys everything he loves, billy is gay, billy is not glorified, both series-timeline compliant with some added scenes, harringrove but it's one-sided(?), max deserves better

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Nancy Wheeler, Neil Hargrove, Steve Harrington, Susan Hargrove, Tommy H. (Stranger Things)

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Billy Hargrove & Neil Hargrove, Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

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**Summary:**

Billy Hargrove felt like a king.

He doesn't breathe, feels the sweat that beads on his face stained hotter from his father's heavy breaths, fists curled into two balls that pinned him hard to the drywall that dug into his spine.

A pretty boy like him's got nothing to worry about, right?

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

i really wanted to get to know and understand billy as a character before i really delved into writing him, even if he is a complete asshole and i didn't want this fic to make light of the fact, i wanted to go into his obsessive rivalry with steve (and being above everyone) and where repressed potential feelings could possibly lay, his father's treatment of him, his family situation and how it comes into play with his relationships with others, and why he manages to be a complete prick to everyone and sabotage anything before anything good could ever happen - who's to say he's absolutely heartless, however? horrible as his actions are, i wanted to write the *why* behind it.

The cold of the wall against his back, bending, just barely, under his weight, was a feeling that he had become acquainted with.

If he dared, he would have admitted he's afraid he'd fall right through it, and his father's fists in balls against his shirt collar, digging a line hard into his neck that tasted like the cigarette smoke on his tongue, still fresh, and this, a fresher cut every time it happened. Sour, bitter, unending. Tasted like *defeat*.

And when he'd let go, *let go*. Letting go is a gentle snow compared to this, not an avalanche. No, when he'd let go, Billy knew the tang of smoke in his mouth grew *rancid* when it mixed with blood, Billy knew that hitting the ground only hurt half as much as every little droplet of spit that landed on his face as the letters *R E S P E C T* dug themselves into his conscious as hard as dull fingers dug into the back of his neck.



He stands, hollers in drunken victory as the keg falls over, spills a weak trickle of the beer barely left, and rejoices in the hands that cheer and slap him on the back, his name a quickly-blurring chant

among the waving crowds of wasted teenagers.

Billy Hargrove felt like a king.

He makes his way into the house, the flock of beer-splashed bodies still trailing behind him like he was the leather-clad rockstar he always wanted to be, past the waving crowds of intoxicated kids that parted in flurries when Billy strode forth, in a rising cheer of his own name. He laughed, foam still dribbling down from his chin to his throat.

His eyes followed across the scene ahead of him, walking forward, barely paying heed to the goths and clowns and vampires and werewolves that made out like the world was about to end in this tiny house at any moment. One person perched on the counter, another downing cup after cup of *PURE FUEL* like no tomorrow.

Hair that rose in a brilliant plume. Black shades indoors that didn't dare to betray the hint of emotion. *Steve Harrington*.

The name floated through Billy's mind like a ship lost in a drunken, drunken sea, and it docked, *finally*, when the *king of Hawkins High* couldn't hide behind his shades when he caught Billy's eye across the room.

Billy raised his eyebrows in greeting, a warning, that this was a game that was about to be lost.



The air of Indiana rang bleak in his mouth, bleak enough to carry a pack a day in his coat pocket - which managed to make everything he put in there reek of smoke, at this point. Billy found himself leaning on the side of his car at the end of the day when the sun threatened to hang low, and reveling in the fact that he was able to do it without feeling like his skin was about to melt in his jeans.

Nonetheless, he would never stop missing California sun.

And when he found himself leaning on the side of his car and tonguing a cigarette that ran dry of smoke hours ago, and *she* was past the parking lot, up the sidewalk and spitting words at *him*, he throws his arms up in defeat, Billy could've sworn he saw him frown, and she, she comes storming down and her hair like fire in the afternoon glow when she gets into the car like she'd lived out this prison sentence a thousand times over, and Billy gets in, stares forward still, his cigarette bounces in his mouth when he asks her *do you know him*.

And she looks at him, and she doesn't *look* like him, thank god, and he'll squeeze all the blood out of her wrist before the word *SISTER* spills out of her mouth like a death sentence. Her face is as red as her hair now and she's staring out the window and Billy hits the gas pedal, figured if they're forced hand in hand, then they're going down together and he'll make sure it isn't pretty, make sure she isn't *happy*, saw the smile she had before she snapped at the boy, wanted to tear it from her face like every second they spent torn away from home and it's *HER* fault, he reminds her, it's *her* fault they're riding this downward spiral into hell, hand in hand, *it's her fault*, he threw her wrist back and felt a rush at the short slap it made against the car door. *It's her fault*, Billy told himself, cut out the faces of Santa Monica, his mother's face adorned in plum-red bruises, like newspaper clippings.

Billy hits the gas pedal, and the kids don't see him coming, Max screams, begs him to stop and he wants her to say *it*. He tells her to say it, over and over and she won't cough the words out, and the red in Billy's vision, as brilliant as her hair and the flush in her cheeks grows harsher. Max doesn't speak, the letters *R E S P E C T* boring into her conscious like a steady-trickling syringe.

And he knows he isn't going to do it. He doesn't know if he has it in him to do it. He hits the gas pedal, and he doesn't know whether the fact scares him.



*He doesn't know if he has it in him to do it* but he does, and the smaller boy flies to the sweat-slicked golden floor with a thud. Billy smirks, feels the wind on his chest as the ball flies seamlessly through the

hoop, falls to the ground, the coach's whistle rings harsh and the others disperse in a uniform crowd of gray and slightly-darker gray.

Steve Harrington lies dizzy on the floor. Tastes like *defeat*.

Billy looks down at him, grinning in the only way he'll let himself because he won and *long live the king, the king is dead*, and apparently didn't realize sweat mixed with hairspray makes for a disgusting mess of a greasy pompadour.

He reaches a hand down, and Steve takes it, and the look of surprise on his face when Billy didn't pull him up, but closer, was *immeasurable*.

There he is - Steve Harrington, wide-eyed in his mix of fear, confusion, and contempt, and Billy Hargrove, holding him half in the air from the ground and *they could've kissed at this distance* in a laughably homoerotic scene between two boys on the ground, one ever-desperate to come out the king. Billy could've thought the fact almost comical, if it wasn't for the way his lips parted in a protest that never came when he whispered scathing words, Billy would've laughed.

But Steve Harrington stared hard into his eye, wide-eyed and lips parted in a protest that never came, and in the second after he spoke the pit of fear, confusion, *everything but contempt* opened somewhere in a wall inside Billy long-since plastered shut, and he *let go*-

Letting go was an understatement, yet again, released his fist before he planted it hard in Harrington's perfect face (he didn't know why he didn't, and he didn't know if that scared him, either) and threw him down onto the the floor and he hoped it hurt more than half as much as every burning urge to-

Billy stands up, finally forces a laugh as he walks away, he wouldn't admit to himself, even, that this was a nervous one. *Long live the king*.



Tommy, again, slick with water and gripping the shower base and

staring Steve in the eye, regaling him with the epic tale of the party where *oh, sweet, sweet Nancy left you for JONATHAN Byers all the way home! How's it feel to lose out to the darkroom peeping Tom?* and the taste of sweat breathes salty in Billy's mouth when Steve doesn't say a word, doesn't look up, slicks his hair still sticking upwards back and lets the water run down his face.

Billy stares. Like some kind of *fag*. The taste, the word on his tongue grows rancid with the taste of blood before he finds it in himself to look away, relax his jaw, and focus on the glow of the yellow tile around them.

Tommy tries, jabbing ruthlessly into Steve's pride with exaggerated keg-hazed accounts of how he *saw* none other than camera-junkie Jonathan Byers *sucking Wheeler's face like a lollipop*.

He leaves, snickering all the way like a freckled hyena, and Steve doesn't say a word. The water runs down his face, then in a line, steady, unmoving, down his collarbones and chest, Billy's hand lingered almost too present in his hair as soap and water mapped out every line of Steve Harrington's body. *Would've expected a guy like him to at least have a shred of muscle*, Billy ran his hand through his hair at last, content, and only semi-convinced that *that* was the reason his eyes continued to wander and never leave their place.

Steve didn't say a word, didn't notice, most likely, or really, really, didn't want to be nude and inches away from the *asshole* who thought it was hilarious to help him up and throw him back down.

Billy realized that Steve *wouldn't* notice, or, at the very least, choose to notice, no matter how hard his eyes burned a hole in his perfect, pretty hair.

*Plenty of bitches in the sea*, he says, and Steve barely looks at him, barely gives him the time of day and he realized that that was a fact he wasn't here to roll with, no, there's a seven-letter word that begins with *r* and he wanted it like nothing else he'd wanted before and the same shades of red, same shades of a rage and rush he hardly understood (and only accepted) came flooding back deep into his mind every second he was inches away from what he craved to taint.

He reaches over, turns the faucet off and Harrington finally turns over to him, exasperated, and Billy smiles, tilts his head back still dripping from the shower,

*"A pretty boy like you's got nothing to worry about."*

Steve rolls his eyes, turns the shower back on for another half second and Billy feels the shit-eating grin wipe off his face as soon as he realized the words that just came out of his mouth and *pretty, pretty, pretty-*

He reaches over, turns the faucet off and Billy reaches an arm out-*no, what the HELL are you doing* and it lingers for a second, *I could lean in and kiss that smooth little face-* slaps him on the back a few times, laughs out some words he barely pays attention to, and Steve doesn't respond.

And he leaves, snags a white towel and throws it around himself and it's too late when Billy realizes his eyes are plastered and hopeless across his body and his breath catches, morphs into a snarl and he can almost feel the spit in his face and the struggle to breathe against two fists and *preening in the mirror again, shoving that stupid, rusty ring back in your ear like some kind of faggot, boy?*

Billy Hargrove slams his fist hard into the shiny pole of the shower and doesn't wince when the sting echoes through his knuckles.



He throws himself onto his bed, makes no effort to toss a myriad of thin blankets over him save for one, *in case*, slips his hands under his jeans and resumes his ongoing love affair with the poster of Patti Smith plastered sloppily to the side of his wall.

Except, this time, it wasn't the album *Horses* running through his mind, nor even Patti, in all her punk rock glory, sliding into his head, or, rather, *onto* his head. Not like he wanted.

*This time, he saw the tiny trails of soap and water that forged their paths down Steve Harrington's chest, down his stomach and cascading, just barely, over the suggestions of muscle that ran all down his midsection. He*

*grabs Harrington, and in this dream, he yields, lets Billy shove his back so hard to the wall that breaths between the steam and the pressure are hard to come by, and Billy feels the rush. Feels the rush when he pushes into him with a hunger he's never felt before, and he knows this doesn't scare him, finds the power, the sense of kingliness he craved with his arms on the keg and his feet in the air and where he first looked down upon the boy in a sea of beer and bad decisions and his own name, repeated so many times, it seemed to lose meaning. In this dream, it's not the voices of a crowd or even a handful of a group, it's Harrington, fighting hard but falling back with every touch, every hungry bite so hard Billy could taste his blood, it's Steve, saying his name, over, and over, restlessly, then angrily, then pleading. Billy knows he has him here, here to stay and dethroned in a haze of steam and two wet bodies in a struggle to stay too close and too far-*

Billy feels the rush, then the daze, then the *disgust* that immediately flooded through his chest. It's not like he wasn't one for absolutely sick fantasies, no, this felt far *sicker* in a way he wasn't able to describe and he couldn't tear the feeling out, couldn't tear out the *need* that drove his fist into the base of the showerhead in the first place, it sat, sick and heavy in his chest like a *threat* he couldn't touch, like Steve Harrington was no longer the guy he could toss like a ragdoll without a second thought, like Steve Harrington wasn't the crude declaration of some king of Hawkins High because there was no one better to take his place. This was something far worse, and far beyond a threat he could grasp in his own two hands.

Patti Smith seemed to stare at him mockingly from her place dangling from drywall. She looked like she knew something Billy didn't even want to dream of uttering. With a hiss and a rip, he tore the poster down.



*"So that's why you've been staring at yourself in the mirror, yet again, like the faggot you are."*

Billy doesn't breathe, feels the sweat that beads on his face stained hotter from his father's heavy breaths, fists curled into two balls that pinned him hard to the drywall that dug into his spine. Neil Hargrove's gaze could've been louder than a scream with how



muffled Susan's stuttering that *you've done enough, please, let's just find Max* fell on two pairs of fast-deafening ears. Billy tilts his head back, stares down at his father shouting harsh into his face to *cancel that date of his, and go find his sister* and for once the word *sister* doesn't cast the usual shade of scarlet over his vision, no, the word *faggot* sits with the weight of the world in Billy's conscious, and if it weren't for stronger hands not an inch away from his neck, Billy would've screamed back.

He had a date tonight.



The only light from which to see Steve Harrington is between the glowing red ember of the cigarette and the amber light of the window behind him, obstructed by the peering silhouettes of his sister and *every* kid he warned she stay away from lined up in a row like pigs to slaughter.

And Harrington thought he could win him over, make him leave with talk smoother than his hair combed back, thought he didn't see right through the golden curtains to hell and he asks him, *what is that?*

He grabs Harrington, and this time, he yields, slamming, sliding across gravel with a face screwed up in pain. Two kicks met with two helpless yelps before Billy walks away without daring to look down once at the mess he'd made of such a *pretty* face, such a *perfect* face, it couldn't stay that way, after all - what ever did? Four little heads duck under the curtains as soon as he leaves Harrington in a ball on the ground.



He opens the door, *who's afraid of the big bad wolf?*



A fist slams into him from behind, knocking him to the side and he turns around, *Harrington*, covered in blood and, shortly enough, Billy's spit as another fist connected into the side of his face.

Billy fell against the sink and the impact of the metal stole the wind

hard from his lungs, but he still laughed, laughed *hysterically* and he heard the screams, the squeaky voices spewing profanity, and then Steve's bellow as his fist rose again to continue the onslaught.

He catches his fist, twists it with ease, propels the smaller boy fast towards the wall, pins him, back pressed so hard against the wall that breaths between the blood in his nose and Billy's two fists balled into his jacket collar were hard to come by. Billy throws him to the ground and his head hits the floor with a resounding *smack* and he feels the rush, the king is dead.

Harrington whimpers, trying to gather himself in a desperate convulsion, Billy sits atop him on a throne of blood and *want* he could never get, but take, and his fist collides into the side of Steve's jaw, over, and over and it tastes rancid on his tongue, *sour*.

He does not wince when the sting echoes through his knuckles.

Steve looks up, helpless in this moment, a beautiful face and broken nose marred by a mosaic of fresh and drying blood, and Billy stares down coldly, holds his fist high.

And he knows he isn't going to do it. He doesn't know if he has it in him to do it. There was a nose that dangled limply from Harrington's broken face. There was blood, barely his own, still drying and staining his wrist. He knew this scared him. *He wanted to take that fear by the throat-*

At last, the sharp jolt in his neck, then the liquid, then the coldness that spread fast.

Billy rises.

Max Mayfield stands back, hair brilliant like fire and eyes that could've as well matched it, and the blurry form of the syringe and a tube of clear blue liquid draining fast came into view.

He stumbled, took two heavy steps forward, the living room blurred into the vague approximation of shapes, then to lifeless blobs of brown and beige and Christmas lights in every color Billy could fathom, and even quicker, into blackness. If he could've thought in

that moment, he could've found some comfort in the sudden grasp of nothingness amongst the blood droplets on scabbed knuckles, his *sister*, eyes the color of the liquid pooling in his neck and just as transparent, Steve, red and dethroned and *finally, but at what cost* of his own accord. It tasted sour on his tongue.

## 2. Chapter 2

### Notes for the Chapter:

now we're getting into billy's relationships and background! i'm SO overwhelmed with happiness over the positive response i got over the first chapter, THANK YOU to everyone who read this and commented and liked what was there, i want to keep on with what i was going at in the first chapter and hopefully improve upon it!

all of this takes place/is going to take place before the Syringe Incident at the end of season 2. maybe after he got jabbed, he's back and stuck in his own head. i dunno. I'm breaking free of the more poetic and transcendental-type tone of the first chapter this time, and going for a more straightforward approach. this is shorter, but the chapters to come are going to develop further into a full-on narrative with billy.

i hope it only goes up from here!

Maxine Mayfield was *immortal*.

And so what, if *daddy beat the shit out of him every weekend when there's another five calls from the school for five out of eight classes you've missed, Billy, son, why don't you go shoot yourself in the head and lay those poor two brain cells left to rest before you drain our bank accounts with this phone bill, too?* So what, if sometimes, when the sting of drywall met his back again and burrowed into his skin like a hungry tick (*he should fucking invest in a leather jacket one of these days*) Max slinked out of the room with a skateboard too big for her body and a glance somewhere between *here it goes again* and sympathy decided against in a split second.

So what, if Susan Hargrove stood paralyzed in the doorway and Billy could've *laughed* at how the one person more cowardly than Max was her own punching bag of a mother, her fiery bangs were blown up like an inferno stiff with hairspray and regret for the ring wrapped

around her finger and Billy didn't feel a shred of sympathy for her *situation* when he felt the hard sting of a hand against his face and Susan's hand flew over her lips and he knew he'd long since stopped counting the times he'd heard that bitchy yelp. Didn't feel a shred of sympathy when her *piece of shit of a hellspawn daughter* slinked out of the room with a skateboard and glanced once, Neil Hargrove would nod, sometimes snort his pig laugh and tell her to *use protection* if she was going to be "*at the arcade*" past six, and she'd scoff, walk out the door and not a word was said until the next morning when Billy can't wolf down the scrambled eggs 'cause the violent violet bruise on his jaw was quite the hindrance and Max sat like the little *freak* she was and ate dry cereal and dad poked at her for it, laughed, walked away and said nothing further. Billy would be lucky if he didn't hear the morning tirade of how he's doomed to disappoint today.

Didn't feel a *fucking* shred of sympathy when for once, it didn't hurt to run a comb through his ever-righteous mullet and throw on the tightest jeans he knew were ridiculous but *c'mon, amigo, it makes my ass look killer*, and then lord of the damned buzzkills Neil Hargrove puts one hand on the chipped edge of his door, leans, furrows his bushy brows again in disappointment and distaste and tells Billy *if you're out past nine and not home with your sister, you know we're gonna have a talk*. and Billy isn't a fucking idiot and he knows dad doesn't think so, either, there were no *talks*, he just knew the words to beat Billy down into a scared-shitless little pansy of a child and he hated the fact, and he *could* punch back and punch harder and remind him *she's not my sister* and then he'd have another *conversation* on a myriad of words that begin with the letter *r* beaten so hard into his skull (and literally so) it'd be dancing the tango in his dreams.

He didn't know what his father was trying to get at. *Hasta la vista, dearest remaining brain cells, it's not the fucking pot that's killin' ya, let's talk about blunt force trauma!*



Maxine Mayfield was immortal.

Because of this, Billy felt just fine with his fingers cuffed around her neck and every word that came out of his mouth more bitter than the

cigarette dancing in his teeth and God, *did she fucking deserve this, that'll teach the little cunt to not dilly-dally after school like a brainless little brat*, the thrill of the hunt rushes through Billy's heart ecstatically when her frown begins to tremble and the tears start to break the dam.

He lets her go, *lets* go an understatement as much as a *conversation* was. She hits the side of the car door and yelps, that same beaten dog, sad bitch cry and Billy slams his foot on the gas pedal.

So what if *daddy laughed and implied a friendless preteen girl was having sex every time she set foot out the door and then beat the shit out of him when he takes her home by ten and not nine?* If every asshole in the universe was rounded up into a royal court, Neil Hargrove would be *king* among assholes. Billy Hargrove wasn't ashamed to be heir to the asshole throne, but it's not like *killing* Mayfield would solve anything, father to son, step-brother to tyrant brat, what's the fucking difference. Dad may be pussy enough enough to leave his *stepdaughter* pristine as ever but Billy knew all too well he was far from too pussy to knock his face into the side of the door. *Gotta keep it fair around here, pops*, he cracks a smile when he catches the reflection of Max's reddening face in the window, and she doesn't look like him, thank *god*, but he tore his eyes away too fast from at least seeing those silent sobs because *god* if her hair wasn't red and eyes were blue this scene would look all too familiar and Billy grips the steering wheel tighter, in some last-ditch effort to assume self control.

*She was basically immortal.*

Didn't mean she couldn't live a forever life without feeling the hell he did.



Steve Harrington was the Keg King. Now just King Of The Fags. Sat alone at the edge of the driveway guzzling a beer like it owed him something.

Billy was *surprised*, handed him the invite and everything with a little

note, *maybe you'll perk up a bit, actually make a basket once you drink your girl problems away, amigo?* Harrington snatched the crumpled piece of paper and promptly told him to fuck off. Billy couldn't contain the *freak* smile that didn't leave his face after Former King (Now Pure Queer) Harrington said a word to him for the first time since Nancy Wheeler ran off somewhere with her new (and equally queer and equally speechless) boyfriend.

Throwing him onto the gym floor was only fun so many times. The warm buzz of alcohol in his stomach, smoke in his throat and head *spinning*, *this* was fun. Billy knew he caught Steve's eye through the flimsy plastic lenses and he didn't mind the beer that trickled down his throat as he made his way over.

"Fuck off."

Steve sloppily raised his hand to his face and tore the shades off like they were some reluctant parasite and *god, is that much better*, Harrington stared up at him and *hard* and angry and fucking *exasperated*, and Billy's head was already spinning from the joint and the vodka and giggled like the *faggy* little schoolboy he was when he realized it'd been so damned long since Harrington realized he wasn't fucking stupid enough to give Billy the time of day anymore.

"No can do, *amigo*." Billy smirks, leaning down and dragging the vodka bottle from out behind his back in a movement he prayed to be smooth but nearly smacked Harrington in his *gorgeous* face and *Christ on a fucking cross, since when was he more beautiful than half the bitches that've purveyed my backseat*.

"Came here to be a stupid teenager," Steve tilts his head back, takes a swig from the bottle by his side. "Not worry about you being an insufferable dickhead. Do yourself a favor and stop *fucking* with me for two seconds and maybe pay attention to your gaggle of potential girlfriends in the garage, there" Steve gestured with a cock of his head to the right, *sure enough, a whore pack awaits*.

"I'm not looking for an orgy, Harrington." Billy snickered, tilting his head back and finding his footing uneven and *whatever*, at least it's the alcohol making him unsteady and not the *dizzying perfection that*

*hazel eyes in the dark are-*

*What the fuck.*

The vodka-induced haze dissipated in seconds. The cold spread of disgust threatened to spill over his chest.

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### **Notes for the Chapter:**

aaand we will be seeing an update later tomorrow! the party's only (literally) just starting. i wanted to establish the relationship between billy and max and the dynamic that's come between them as a result of billy's dad. a little less steve and a little less length here, but it's all necessary.

don't forget to please comment or kudos if you liked it!! please give criticism, and DEFINITELY prompts!! i want this to be your guys' fic as much as it is mine.

### **Author's Note:**

pleaaaaaaase leave a comment or a kudos if you enjoyed this fic!! i had a super fun time with this and if you have any further recommendations i'd love to hear them! i hope i characterized billy well here because that was the goal, if you have any tips/ideas drop those down as well!